



STATE SENATOR • LIZ BRATER • 18TH DISTRICT

# Brater Press Release

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## **DEMS OPPOSE TAKE-OVER OF LOCAL HEALTH AND AG ORDINANCES**

*Seed bills voted out of committee on party-line vote*

LANSING—The Senate Agriculture, Forestry, & Tourism Committee today voted to send to the full Senate legislation that eliminates the ability of local governments to regulate genetically modified seeds. Opponents of the bills expressed concerns that this would pose substantial risks to public health and the environment including the risk of allergic reactions, the creation of super-weeds, and the contamination of neighboring crops. Republican Senators Gerry Van Woerkom (R-Muskegon), Jud Gilbert (R-Algonac), and Ron Jelinek (R-Three Oaks) voted in favor of the bill.

“This bill promotes very narrow corporate interests at the expense of Michigan’s small family farms and the health of Michigan citizens,” said Sen. Brater. “This legislation would threaten the safety of our food supply.”

If this bill becomes law, many citizens will be at risk. Farmers and property owners risk having to cope with super-weeds that cannot be killed by standard pesticides if cross pollination of existing weeds and pesticide resistant seeds multiply. Organic farmers are at risk of losing their organic certification and markets if genetically modified seeds contaminate their fields. Unknown allergens could be created by uncontrolled cross-pollination, and many citizens could experience increased reactions or illness from new pollens and other air-borne contaminants. Additionally, small farmers face the possibility of terminator seeds pollinating with natural seeds forcing them to buy new seeds every year.

“While genetically modified foods aren’t a concern for everyone, many citizens rely on organic products for their health and well-being,” said Sen. Gretchen Whitmer (D-East Lansing). “We cannot permit regulations that limit consumers’ control over what they are eating.”

Currently, local units of government may adopt ordinances that regulate or ban the use of certain seeds, most commonly genetically modified seeds. The legislation would prevent local governments from passing ordinances which prohibit or regulate the labeling, sale, storage, transportation, distribution, use, or planting of agricultural, vegetable, flower, or forest tree seeds.

“This is part of a nation-wide effort to allow Agri-business to run roughshod over small farmers,” said Brater. “There is no need for the state to pre-empt the right of local governments to regulate this matter.”

This bill is opposed by the Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council, Center for Food Safety, Organic Food and Farm Alliance, Michigan Environmental Council, and Sierra Club.

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*State Senator Brater represents Senate District 18 which includes the cities of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Chelsea, the Villages of Barton Hills and Dexter, and the following townships: Ann Arbor, Augusta, Dexter, Freedom, Lima, Lyndon, Northfield, Salem, Scio, Sharon, Superior, Sylvan, Webster and Ypsilanti. She is the minority vice chair of the natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee and the Agriculture, Forestry, and Tourism Committee.*